

## **Government 080: Elements of Political Theory**

*Autumn 2015*

*MW 3:30-4:45 Reiss 112*

### **Instructor:**

Prof. Joshua Cherniss

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Office Hours: Tue 3:30-5

Bunn Intercultural Center (ICC) 660

### **Teaching Assistants**

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### ***Course Description***

This course introduces students to political theory through a survey of the history of political thought, structured around three broad thematic units, concerning 1) the moral demands of politics – why one should engage in politics, and for what purpose; what sort of action and character politics demands, and how these demands relate to the demands of (private) morality; 2) the basis and extent of a government's right to claim authority over those living under it, and the basis and limits to individuals' duty to obey the government; and 3) the basic presuppositions, ideals, and demands of democracy and liberal constitutionalism, and the relationship between these two influential modes of modern politics. In considering these themes, we will study works by Plato, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Marx, and Mill, as well as assorted authors from the twentieth century. Each of these thinkers presents a different perspective on normative questions of political theory – that is, questions concerning how politics ought to be (or, may best be) practiced.

The course aims (1) to familiarize students with some of the central concepts of political thought; (2) to demonstrate that political thought is an ongoing dialog among thinkers from various times and historical circumstances, addressing recurring themes in different contexts, and using a variety of methods and intellectual tools; and (3) to suggest that some of the concerns that confronted philosophers centuries ago are still relevant to the problems of today, and that their responses to these problems may be useful in thinking about the problems contemporary citizens confront.

### ***Course Expectations/Evaluation***

Each student is expected to regularly attend lecture and discussion sections. If you need to be absent from section, you must notify your TA before the section meets; you are permitted **up to 3 excused absences** (absences due to health or family emergencies) without your grade being affected, provided you notify your TA of your absence ahead of time. You may also **miss up to 5 lectures** without effect on your grade. Your **participation grade** is based on **attendance**, the preparation of **1-2 questions/comments on the reading prepared before each lecture, and sent (with additions or revisions) to your TA before section**, and your **contributions to discussion**. In addition, there will be a take-home midterm, a final short (1-2 pages) self-evaluative writing project, and a final exam. Late assignments will lose **1/3 of a grade per day late**, unless the student has procured an extension from the instructor **before** the deadline.

Your grade will be calculated based on:

Attendance and participation: 30%

Mid-term: 30%

Final Reflective Paper: 10%

Final exam: 30%

### Weekly Schedule:

**Sept 2:** *Introduction: Five Types of Political Theory, Four Types of Readers, and Three Political Trials*

#### **Unit I. Virtue, Justice, and Necessity: The Relation of Politics and Morality**

1. *Plato: Justice and the Good Life*

**Sept 9:** Plato, *The Apology of Socrates; The Republic* Book I

**Sept 14, 16:** Plato, *The Republic* Books II (all), III (386-404 [pp. 82-107], 408-17[pp. 115-28]), IV-V (all)

**Sept 21:** *The Republic* Books VI (484-504 [pp. 214-42]), VII (514-522 [pp. 253-63]), VIII-IX (all)

**Sept 23: No Class**

2. *Machiavelli: Virtue, Power and Glory*

**Sept 28:** Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Dedication, Chapters 1, 5-10, 15-26

**Sept 30:** Machiavelli, *The Discourses on Livy* Book I Preface, chapters 1-6, 9-12, 18, 21, 26, 34, 46, 49, 53, 55, 58

**Oct 5:** Machiavelli, *Discourses* Book II Preface, chapters 2, 15, 19 [omit first paragraph], 27, 29; Book III chapters 1, 3, 7-9, 22, 29, 31, 41 [also: how to write a political theory essay]

3. *Political Responsibility vs. Personal Conscience: Modern Perspectives*

**Oct 7:** Weber, "Politics as a Vocation" (selections); Walzer, "Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands"

**Oct 12: No class**

**OCT 13: Midterms Due**

#### **Unit II. The Question of Sovereignty: Legitimacy, or Why Should We Obey the State?**

1. *Hobbes: From Egoism to Authority?*

**Oct 14:** Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Introduction, Chapters 4-7, 10-11, 13-16

**Oct 19:** *Leviathan* Chapters 17-21

**Oct. 21:** *Leviathan* Chapters 26-7, 29-31

2. *Locke: From Natural Law and Rights to Civil Authority*

**Oct 26:** Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, Chapter 1 section 3, Chapters 2-6

**Oct 28:** *Second Treatise*, Chapters 7-9, 18-19

3. *Rousseau: Natural Freedom, Moral Freedom, and Democratic Authority*

**Nov 2:** Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, Books I-II

**Nov 4:** *On the Social Contract* Book III, Ch 1-4, 8-11, 15-18; Book IV 1-2, 7-9

4. *Applying and Questioning the Social Contract*

**Nov 9:** Jefferson et. al., "The Declaration of Independence"; Bentham, "Review of the Declaration of Independence"; United States Constitution, Preamble.

**Nov 11:** Pateman, "Contract, the Individual and Sovereignty"; King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"

#### **Unit III. What is Freedom: Democracy versus Liberalism?**

1. *Civic Republicanism, Modern Liberalism, and Constitutionalism*

**Nov 16** Constant, “The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns”

2. *Marx: The Illusion of Modern Freedom vs. the Prospect of True Freedom?*

**Nov 18:** Marx, “On the Jewish Question”; “Contribution to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction”; “Alienated Labour”, “Private Property and Communism”

**Nov 23:** Marx, *The German Ideology* Part 1; *The Communist Manifesto*, Parts I and II

**Nov 25: No class**

3. *Mill: Personal Freedom vs. Social Tyranny?*

**Nov 30:** Mill, *On Liberty* I-II [particularly pp. 5-29, 59-61]

**Dec 2:** Mill, *On Liberty* III, IV pp. 83-93; V pp. 104-6 and 120-28

4. *Liberty and Limits: Liberal Constitutionalism, Radical Democracy, and Civic Community in Conflict?*

**Dec 7:** Sheldon Wolin, “Fugitive Democracy”

Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty” (selections)

Judith Shklar, “The Liberalism of Fear”

**Dec 9: Course wrap-up and review**

#### ***Course Readings:***

**Books (available for purchase at the bookstore, or online):**

Plato, *The Republic* (trans B. Jowett; Vintage)

Machiavelli, *Selected Political Writings* (ed. D. Wootton; Hackett)

Hobbes, *Leviathan* (ed. R. Tuck; Cambridge)

Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration* (Dover)

Rousseau, *On the Social Contract* (trans G.D.H. Cole; Dover)

J. S. Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays* (ed. J. Gray; Oxford World's Classics)

*The Portable Karl Marx* (ed. Eugene Kamenka; Penguin)

**In addition, you may find the following works online only:**

Plato, *Apology* <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/apology.html>

Weber, “Politics as a Vocation”, <http://anthropos-lab.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Weber-Politics-as-a-Vocation.pdf>

Declaration of Independence:

[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html)

Constitution of the United States:

[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_transcript.html)

Jeremy Bentham, “A Short Review of the Declaration”, included down the page at <https://persistentenlightenment.wordpress.com/2014/07/03/of-rights-and-witches-benthams-critique-of-the-declaration-of-independence/>

Emerson, “The Fugitive Slave Law”,

<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/emerson/4957107.0011.001/1:11?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>

Constant, “The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns”,

<http://www.uark.edu/depts/comminfo/cambridge/ancients.html>

**Other works will be distributed by the teaching staff via Blackboard.**

#### ***Class Cancellation Contingency Plan***

If classes are canceled on the day of a lecture, the lecture for that day will be recorded and posted online for individual viewing; this viewing will be paired with required online class discussion of the

material covered in the lecture (not necessarily the lecture itself). If classes are canceled the day of a section meeting, your TA will be in touch about making up the discussion.

### ***Statement Regarding Academic Integrity:***

Students are expected to closely follow all policies and instructions announced by the professor and the student's section leader – and to **contact the instructor or section leader when in doubt** about an assignment or general course expectations.

Assignments will require students to discuss the assigned reading material; students are **not required or expected to make use of materials outside of the readings** specified on the syllabus. If you do make use of any other works, you must **note that you have done so, and identify the works consulted by title, author's name, and (if available) date of publication**. You are also expected to **place all direct quotes from either required texts or secondary readings within quotation marks, and identify the place within the work (by page number, paragraph number, or chapter, depending on what is available) from which the quote comes**; similarly, if you **paraphrase** a work you have read, you are expected to **identify the work you are paraphrasing**.

**The use of words or ideas directly taken from others, without acknowledgment, constitutes plagiarism** – a very serious academic offense. **Students caught plagiarizing will be considered in violation of the Georgetown Honor System, and face discipline accordingly**. Let's try to avoid that!

**If you are in any doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, see here:**

[http://thevisualcommunicationguy.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Infographic\\_Did-I-Plagiarize1.jpg](http://thevisualcommunicationguy.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Infographic_Did-I-Plagiarize1.jpg)

### ***Other Course Policies***

Students are expected to take notes by hand, unless they request and receive special dispensation to use laptops; students whose handwriting prevents them from taking notes may consider having lectures transcribed through the Academic Resource Center. Cell phones should be put away during class hours, and texting in class is not permitted.

### ***Useful Information on University-Wide Policies and Resources:***

- Academic calendar (<http://registrar.georgetown.edu/academic-calendars/current-year/>)
- Lauinger Library (<http://www.library.georgetown.edu/>).

The following page contains useful links to reference and citation resources for students: <http://www.library.georgetown.edu/citations>

- Graduate School of Arts & Sciences policies including academic and non-academic rules (<http://grad.georgetown.edu/academics/policies/>).
- Provost's policy on accommodating students' religious observances (<http://campusministry.georgetown.edu/document/1242799694431/Religious+Holy+Days+2013-14.pdf>)
- Student Academic Resource Center (<http://academicsupport.georgetown.edu/>).

### ***Resources for Disability Support:***

If you believe you have a disability, you should contact the Academic Resource Center (202.687.8354; [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu)) for further information. The Center is located in the Leavey Center, Suite 335 . You may also visit the Academic Resource Center's webpage for students with disabilities at <http://academicsupport.georgetown.edu/disability/> Please also feel free to get in touch with the course instructor, or your TA, regarding any disability-related difficulties you encounter in the course.